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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

A-139

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TO Department of State

EO 11652: XGDS 2

TAGS: PINS, GT

FROM Amembassy GUATEMALA

SUBJECT: INTERNAL SECURITY: MONTHLY REPORT OF INCIDENTS, JULY 1974

REF

SUMMARY: The first month of the Laugerud Administration was a relatively peaceful one in which the level of political violence was low and few incidents could be attributed to either the Right or the Left. The low level of political violence appears to be due in part to the new administration's oft-expressed intention to handle security problems in a legally correct way. Continuation of this approach will depend upon the reaction of the Far Left as well as on Laugerud's assessment of the effectiveness of non-violent methods. The July total of 41 incidents of a possible political nature was identical with the June total, which had been the lowest monthly figure in a year. Major incidents included a shootout between police and a guerrilla band in Retalhuleu and the arrest of a high-ranking PGT member in the capital.

of violence were attributed to subversive elements this month, but they continued to make their presence known through propaganda activities. A new variety of "revolutionary banner" was sighted in several areas of the country. The most prominent victim this month was a PID Congressman who escaped uninjured from an attack by unidentified assailants. In the field of nonpolitical violence, a series of attacks by a band of common criminals has resulted in several deaths in Izabal Department.

END SUMMARY.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/WR
 REVIEWED BY *Eay* DATE OCT 1974
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1. Statistics: The relatively low level of political violence which prevailed during the last month of the Arana regime continued into the first month of the Laugerud Administration. The July total of 41 press-reported incidents of a possible political nature was identical with the June total, which had been the lowest monthly figure in a year. The number of attributed incidents also remained low in July, with the press charging only four incidents (10%) to leftist subversive elements and two (5%) to the Government security forces. None of the attributed incidents resulted in bloodshed. Incidents included three kidnappings, one disappearance, and twenty assassinations, six with reported signs of torture. Victims this month included eight campesinos, a taxi driver, a baker who apparently was kidnapped by mistake, and a child whose brief kidnapping appears to have been intended as harassment of his MLN-member father.

Comment: There have been cases in the past (i.e. February 1973 and June 1973) in which the monthly totals have dropped even lower than 41, only to rise subsequently to very high levels. The period immediately after President Arana took office in 1970 also was one of relative peace. However, low monthly totals in June, July and August 1970 (36, 38 and 29) were immediately followed by a dramatic increase in September (84), due to renewed activity by the FAR as well as by Government security forces. As we noted in the June internal security report, the Laugerud Government has repeatedly expressed its intention to end political violence, whether initiated by the Right or the Left. The "depistolization" program begun on July 6 has continued into August.

End Comment.

II. Attributed Incidents:

To the GOG: On the night of July 25, Carlos Enrique Orantes Triccoli, a former University Students' Association (AEU) president (1968-69) and reported high-level PGT member, was arrested by

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plainclothes policemen on a street in downtown Guatemala City. Orantes' wife presented a petition of habeas corpus and shortly thereafter the police acknowledged that Orantes was being held in the First Police Corps headquarters under charges of "violation of democratic institutions." The police claimed that Orantes was carrying subversive literature at the time of his arrest.

Earlier in the month, the police were less successful in attempting to capture members of a PGT cell in San Sebastian Retalhuleu. On July 9 police agents were met with gunfire as they prepared to enter a house where a guerrilla band had been reported sighted. The guerrillas managed to escape during the shootout which ensued. Inside the house the police found automatic weapons, Communist literature and maps of the surrounding area. The Army joined the police in an unsuccessful search for the fugitives in the nearby foothills.

To the Left: This month there were several reported incidents of subversive propaganda activity. In San José Acatempa, Jutiapa, police arrested two men charged with agitating the citizenry to demonstrate against local and national authorities. The arrested men reportedly confessed to being associated with similar elements in other areas of the country who recently have been putting up a new variety of "revolutionary banner." The black flags are decorated with a white skull and the initial "R" (for Revolution). Several newspapers have reported that these flags have been sighted in Quezaltenango and Huehuetenango. They do not correspond to the emblem of any known subversive organization.

Leftist subversive elements may also have been responsible for tossing thousands of tacks on the Atlantic Highway on the afternoon of Presidential Inauguration Day, July 1. The tacks probably were an attempt to impede the progress of ex-President Arana's "homecoming" caravan to Chiquimula.

III. Other Incidents: The press reported three incidents this month in which individuals driving in the area of the capital's Liberation Boulevard were fired upon by unidentified assailants in moving cars. Automatic weapons were reported used in all three incidents but in only one case was anyone wounded. One of the uninjured victims of these mysterious attacks was PID Congressman René Arenas Gutierrez. Arenas also escaped unharmed from a similar attack last April.

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IV. Non-Political Violence: Not counted in our monthly total were two incidents of armed robbery in Izabal which resulted in a total of eight dead and four seriously wounded. The two attacks, on July 10 and 31, both were made in the early morning against individuals travelling on the private railroad operated by the Del Monte Company at its Bananera plantation. These incidents continue a series of similar attacks by a heavily armed, uniformed band operating in the Morales-Lake Izabal area. On at least one occasion the band has attempted to portray itself as a guerrilla organization called the "Popular Revolutionary Army," but the Guatemalan Army in a statement on July 22 denied the existence of any such group. Knowledgeable sources in Izabal have told us they believe that the authors of these recent attacks are common criminals.

The Escuadron de la Muerte has not claimed any victims since President Laugerud was inaugurated on July 1. The clandestine Death Squad took credit for some 27 executions of common criminals between February and June 1974.

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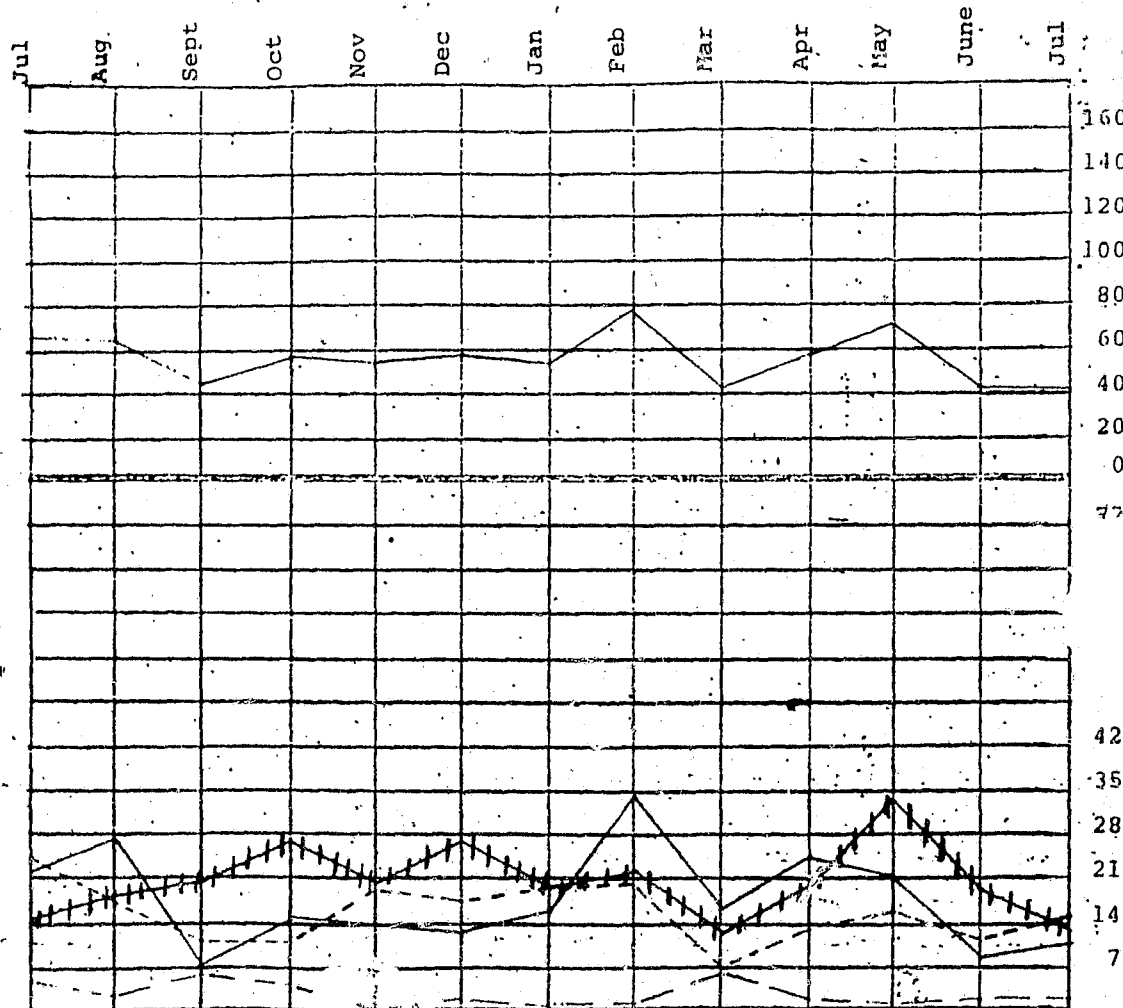
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EXEMPT FROM GDS OF EO 11652
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5B (2)

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MONTHLY FREQUENCY OF POLITICAL INCIDENTS BY REGION - JULY 1973 - JULY 1974

Enclosure 9-139
Guatemala AIA



TOTAL 41

For purposes of this graph, acts of violence include shootings, bombings, and deaths, all of which appear to be politically motivated.

Capital area - Sacatepequez, Guatemala

South Coast - San Marcos, Quezaltenango, Retalhuleu, Suchitepequez, Escuintla, Santa Rosa

Eastern Region - Jutiapa, El Progreso, Jalapa, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Izabal, El Peten

Highlands - Totonicapan, Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, El Quiche, Baja Verapaz, Alta Verapaz, Solola